

Wandering In The Dark

*Growing Up (So Much
Harder Than The Movies) -
I*

Krasimer

Wandering In The Dark by Krasimer

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Summary:

Mike thought he was the only one to remember the monster as it had been -- Big as life, ugly as sin, more terrifying than he had known how to handle.

He didn't know that Stan thought the same.

(“He still calls this town cursed,” Mike called out to Stan, seeing him sitting on his own front steps. “Just says it’s sleeping.”)

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It started when they were sixteen.

“Hey, you’re getting rid of your history research stuff?”

Ben looked down at the box in his hands, then back up at Mike. “Yeah. I mean...I guess I’m just not really into historical research anymore? It was a fun hobby, for a while, but I just...I dunno.”

Mike propped his bike upright, pushing down the kickstand for once. “Can I have it?”

“Sure,” Ben shrugged and handed him the box. “Need any help getting it home? Lot of stuff.” He shrugged, tugging his shirt down self-consciously. He had lost a lot of weight over the school year, gotten a girlfriend, grown up in general. He hardly seemed like the chubby kid that had joined the Losers club three years before.

With a nod, Mike carefully sorted things out of the box and into the basket on his bike. “That’d be good, I think.”

Picking up his own bike, Ben slid papers and books into the set of panniers on the back of his bike. “Just going to your house, right?” he looked up to see his mom waving from the kitchen window. “Should probably make it a quick trip, if we can. I’ve got to go to work in a few hours.”

“Yeah,” Mike looked at him, frowning a little. “Definitely. Just need to get all this stuff home, don’t want to have to make too many trips.”

Once everything was put into baskets and bags, they peddled off.

Richie was next.

“What do you mean, ‘leaving’?”

Richie looked up at him, his eyes unusually wide and wet and more than a little upset. “My mom and dad got divorced, okay?” he scrubbed the heels of his palms over his knees. “Dad is keeping me, we’re moving to Los Angeles.”

Eddie was sitting at his side, their shoulders bumping together, his hands clasped between his own knees so tightly that his knuckles were white. “You can still come – We can still come visit you, it isn’t the end of the world!” he fluttered about for a moment and Mike watched his eyes grow a little wider. He looked nearly unhinged, like he was a scared kid again.

“Yeah,” Bill managed to get the word out without stuttering. “We’ll come visit, I m- I mean, we’re your friends, Richie.”

“Thanks,” Richie looked entirely unhappy with something, but Mike couldn’t tell if it was being their friend or leaving. “Dad says I can finish out the school year. We only have...”

“Two months,” Eddie said it softly, bumping his shoulder into Richie’s again. “We only have two months until you leave.”

There was something about the way Eddie said ‘We’ that had Mike blushing, just a little.

He had long since suspected something was going on between the two. They were the happiest and also the most annoyed when they were together, Eddie kept Richie in his life despite the jokes the glasses-wearing boy made constantly about his mother. Mike had figured, at first, that it was just the price a person had to pay when keeping Richie as a friend, but Eddie had been the one to handle it day in and day out.

Things had made more sense when he thought about what he had seen out of the corner of his eye in the house on Neibolt.

In the moment they had been certain they were all going to die, little Eddie Kaspbrak had been focused with his entire being on Richie Tozier. Richie had been holding Eddie's face so that the smaller boy could only look at him, could only see *him*. Not the ugly death descending on them, not the fear and chaos around them.

Mike swallowed against the sudden lump in his throat at the unfairness of it all.

He suspected that Richie and Eddie had loved each other in their own secret way for longer than the rest of the Losers had known.

When he looked up to see Bill and Stan, Bill was talking to Eddie and Richie but Stan...

Stan was staring at him.

Bill was after Richie.

"So where are you going to go?"

Bill laughed, shrugging. "I don't k- don't know yet. College, though."

"That's good," Mike looked up as Stan dropped down next to them. It was the graduation party Bill's parents had thrown for him, he was wearing a tie and the nicest slacks he owned. Eddie had already gone home and Ben was at his own party, taken out to dinner by his grandparents and the rest of his family, so it was just the three of them. "College will be good for you, give you a chance to meet someone, figure out what you're doing."

On Bill's other side, Stan nodded. "You're going to do great," he told his friend. When Bill smiled so hard his eyes crinkled shut, Stan's gaze moved to Mike.

He had been doing that a lot, lately.

"What about you?" Mike asked him, suddenly very aware of how

tight his tie was. "Where are you going, Stan?"

"Probably to go work in my uncle's office." Stan drew his knees to his chest, eyes finally dropping from Mike to focus on the floor. "Be an intern in his accounting firm while I go to college to learn the trade. Dad says it's already all arranged, I just have to decide by the end of the summer."

"That'll be interesting," Mike smiled at him.

"Mm."

Bill sighed and looked back into the house. "I think my mom wants me to come take photos n-now."

"Yeah, yeah," Mike nodded. "Go be the guest of honor."

He smiled at both of them, patted their shoulders, then walked back up the small staircase and into the house.

Mike and Stan were left on the porch together.

"Where are you going to go?" Stan's voice was oddly quiet.

"I'm staying in Derry," Mike shrugged one shoulder. "My grandfather's getting older, needs more help around the business now. I'll get out one day, but I guess it's just not supposed to happen for me yet."

"Does he still say this place is cursed?"

Mike blinked a couple of times and turned to look at Stan again. "What?"

The Jewish teenager – young man – sighed and stood up again. "Never mind," he waved Mike off as he half climbed, half walked up the stairs and back into the house.

It meant that Stan was last.

“He still calls this town cursed,” Mike called out to Stan, seeing him sitting on his own front steps. “Just says it’s sleeping.”

Stan looked up at him, his eyes wide as he studied his face. “Do you remember?” he asked quietly. “Because I still remember. Hard not to, I saw these...These lights.” He shook his head, turning away. “It’ll just sound crazy.”

“No,” Mike walked his bike closer and offered Stan a hand up. “It won’t. Can we talk for a bit?”

Brown eyes stared up at him for what seemed like an eternity before Stan accepted his hand and got to his feet. “Not here,” his voice was back to being soft again. For a moment, as he turned to grab his own bike, Mike could have sworn he saw Stan’s cheeks turn pink.

They walked in silence until they reached the end of the street and then they got on their bikes and started pedaling slowly.

“I still have scars,” Stan broke the silence once they had gotten to a back street with only one or two cars parked on it. “On my face, I mean. From where It bit me.” He looked around and drifted to a stop, watched as Mike did the same. “When my face was in It’s mouth, I saw these lights. Down It’s throat. They were so bright and I...”

“It made sure you remembered,” Mike stared at him, a little in awe. “For whatever reason, It made sure that you would remember.”

“And then you kept Ben’s research,” Stan nodded, still perched over his bike like he would get back on the seat and ride away into the sunset, never to return. “And I knew you remembered too. I don’t know why we’re the ones who remember everything, but I...” he shuddered, tears welling up in his eyes, his shoulders shaking. “I’m just glad I’m not the only one.”

“Hey,” Mike got off his own bike and let it drop to the ground, putting a gentle hand on Stan’s shoulder.

Instead of pushing him away, like he expected, Stan dragged him closer.

With the heat of the other's body against his, Mike felt something twist through him, repositioning his hands so that he was hugging Stan tightly. "Fuck," Stan muttered, nearly shoving his face into the crook of Mike's neck. "I don't want to be alone in remembering this, I don't want our friends leaving, I don't want to be alone," his hands were clenched tightly in the fabric of Mike's shirt. "Please don't leave me alone."

"I'm not going to," Mike whispered the words, letting his chin drop to the crown of Stan's head.

After a few minutes of standing there, as close as they could get without sharing the same clothes, Stan calmed down. The shaking subsided and he pulled back a little, scrubbing at his eyes. "Can we go someplace and be alone?" he asked the question with hopeful eyes and Mike nodded.

"Yeah," he pulled away and realized that the anxious worry that had been building in his head for the past five years had almost completely melted away. "C'mon, we can go to my house."

They rode in silence the rest of the way.

Mike's bedroom was neat and quiet and he liked the way that Stan seemed to almost slide into it without any sign he hadn't always been there. "I like your room," he turned to Mike and smiled for the first time in ages. "Suits you."

"Here," Mike dropped onto the bed, kicking off his shoes and leaning back against the headboard. "Come and sit with me?"

Stan nodded and used the foot of the bed to balance as he took his own shoes off. With that done, he settled himself into Mike's lap, curling close once more. "Is this okay?"

"That's perfect," Mike pressed his nose into Stan's hair, threading his fingers into the mass of curls and letting his eyes droop shut. His other arm was around Stan's waist, holding him close. Stan was soft and warm against him, pliant, like he would move with Mike. Like they were going to stay as one mass for the rest of their lives. "Have you decided about the internship yet?"

"I don't want to," Stan's chest was against his, legs wrapped around Mike's waist. "I don't want to be alone."

"Everyone else left Derry."

"Yeah, and that's part of why I *don't* want to go," Stan's lips pressed against Mike's neck, just over his pulse, as if he could keep him alive simply by feeling it thrum into his own body. "You're going to be left here, all alone. That isn't right, it isn't fair!"

Mike held him even tighter. "I think we both need to get out of Derry," he smiled. "You're good with numbers, you should go to that internship. Get a job at your uncle's office once you graduate college. I could save up money, move to an apartment in the same city."

"You-"

"I would never leave you alone," Mike smiled at him when he pulled back to look at him. Stan's eyes were wide and full of wonder. "I would call you every day and I would write you so many letters and I would make sure that you were never alone."

Between the look on Stan's face and the way they were holding each other, Mike should have expected the kiss that followed.

Stan tasted like the lazy days of summer, the hint of autumn coming in and making everything crisp.

Author's Note:

Hey guys, guess who saw the new IT movie.

Guess who immediately got sad over knowing what happens to the characters once the nightmare is over.